



Editor Mitchell's Statement.

A Review of the First Baptist Church Trouble.

THE PRESS AND ITS MISSION.—A VESTED RIGHT CANNOT BE MADE A PUBLIC OFFENSE.

The Gospel Rule.—Rights of the Deacon Board.—Both God's and Man's Law Disregarded.—The Issue Joined.—Will Contend to the End.

RICHMOND, VA., Aug. 12, 1901.

To the Members of the First Baptist Church:

Forty-three years, I have been a consistent contributing member of the First Baptist Church and during that time, I have never attempted to speak or participate in the affairs of that body.

I would also remind you that during that time I have never been called on to appear before it upon any charge.

When the time came for the election of pastor, I broke the long silence, and protested against one of the most outrageous desecrations of God's house ever seen in this or any other community.

You are familiar no doubt with the disgraceful proceedings of Monday night, June 3, 1901, when I with others was jeered, booed and threatened, with bodily injury on account of not being favorable to the candidacy of Rev. W. T. Johnson.

THE CHARGE AS PRESENTED.

Enough for that! Suffice it to say that injury was added to insult when upon a trumped up charge of having been guilty of a public offense, I was again denied the right of defense and in the face of the most outrageous partisan railing by Rev. Tom H. Briggs, by a vote of 56 to 64 was declared excluded from the church. Thus by 8 votes was this outrageous illegal perpetration. This was done in a church with a membership of 2000.

The charge was that I published in the columns of the PLANET the private letter of Rev. W. T. Johnson addressed to the church and also the proceedings of the church meeting of July 1, 1901.

THE RIGHT TO PUBLISH.

I presume you know that as editor of the PLANET, it is my right and duty to publish anything I see fit, being responsible only in the courts of the commonwealth for the abuse of the privilege. This right is enshrined in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights of Virginia.

It is absurd to say that a right—a vested right in the recognized law of this country is a crime in the recognized law of the church.

It is a fact that there is not one line in the constitution of the First Baptist Church which says that the proceedings of a church shall not be published in the columns of a newspaper. Neither is there any punishment provided for so doing.

THE WORLD SHOULD KNOW.

On the other hand, it is a well-known principle that the church in its meetings should do nothing which it is ashamed for the world to know.

The church is not a secret organization. It concedes the right to publish its proceedings in a favorable light and thereby acknowledges the right to publish the proceedings in an unfavorable light.

The statement that an official letter addressed to 2000 people is a private document is too ridiculous to admit of a moment's consideration.

An official letter cannot be a private letter. I had a right to publish it.

THE EDITOR'S POSITION.

I stated in the PLANET at the time and assert now that if there is anything in the report of the proceedings which is either incorrect or untrue, I stand ready to make such a correction.

I need hardly state that the editorial department of the PLANET, for which I am personally responsible is on the 4th page and my name appears at the top of the page.

In these columns, up to this writing, nothing has appeared concerning the First Baptist Church.

The article of which complaint is made appeared in the report of the proceedings of the church meeting.

If the church or any member interested in the controversy desires to make a statement, the columns of the PLANET are open.

WILL CONTEND TO THE END.

But, on the other hand, if any attempt is made to question my right to publish or to punish me for so doing, I shall continue the contest to the end of the chapter.

I claim the right guaranteed under the law, and deny the right of any individual or organization to limit me in that right.

dividual or organization to limit me in that right.

I shall publish anything I see fit which is couched in decent language and is a source of information to our readers. I shall expose all improper and unwholesome rings, cliques or combinations, regardless of the consequences, either to myself or the journal which I represent.

HAVE NO FEARS.

When in the right, I have no fear. I have never yet trailed my banner in the dust in the defense of the down-trodden colored people, even when I faced combat with the most powerful and dangerous of the ones with which I am now contending. I have trusted in God and He has never yet deceived or forsaken me.

I have been in the courts three times in defense of my right to publish and three times have white juries decided in favor of my right to publish.

IT SEEMS TO BE THE IMONY OF FACTS THAT I have been but once before a body of colored people and that time have been condemned for exercising a privilege, which is known and recognized to be a right by all men, who have the intelligence and ability to understand the fundamental principles underlying our form of government.

Having then overridden the laws of man, this same ring proceeded to override the laws of God.

NO LAW VIOLATED.

No where in the Bible which is the fountain-head of all law and is in fact the guide to an extent even in the courts of the land can there be found one word, one syllable to cover the case or to condemn a member who has been excluded from the church.

It is plainly evident that this action was illegal and void.

I reiterate then that I have violated no law of the church. How then could a demand be made upon me to ask pardon when no offense had been committed? How then could I be legally excluded when no rule of the church had been violated? I do not presume that it is necessary for me to call attention to the 18th chapter of Matthew, which sets forth the proper rule of conduct in dealing with all cases of discipline.

Instead of complying with the provisions, a paper containing forged provisions was presented to the Deacon Board July 7th, calling for a meeting Monday night, July 15th, and an effort was made to exclude me without even a hearing or even a notice to appear.

THE GOSPEL RULE, DISREGARDED.

No one had been to see me, but on Monday, a written communication was sent to me to appear at the church meeting August 5th to show cause why I should not be excluded.

Did you ever hear of a church sending a written communication to a brother, asking him to appear? Do you not know that it was proper for the member, who made the charge to go to the brother against whom the charge was made, and thereby comply with the mandatory provisions of the 18th chapter of Matthew?

THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH.

Certainly, a committee should have waited upon him. But this was not done. When I appeared before the church, I was brow-beaten and insulted. Although called to show cause why I should not be excluded, when I obeyed the church and appeared, I was denied the right to do what the church had directed me to do and was excluded while on the floor in my own defense.

I presume you know that the case of discipline can come properly before the First Baptist Church until it has first been brought before the Deacon Board. Should that body fail or refuse to consider it, then it can be brought before the church; but, not until this is done can a brother be brought before the church.

THE CHURCH, THE LAST RESORT.

So true is this that "Hiscock's New Directory for Baptist Churches," the recognized Baptist authority, declares that should a brother be brought before the church first, before an effort has been made to correct the offense complained of, the member who brings the matter up should be himself punished.

This then is a brief review of the case which has attracted attention throughout this country, and which is being watched with interest by all, regardless of religion or denomination.

NEVER HEARD OF SUCH BEFORE.

I am frank to confess that I have never before heard of such an attempted usurpation of power on the part of any body of people, striking as it does at a vital basic principle of the republic and interfering with the sacred powers of the courts.

The question before me is, Can wings and representatives of secret organizations name the pastors for churches, thus depriving the bona fide members of the church of their rights in this matter?

Can they stifle and muzzle the public press, which, as the bulwark of liberty was defined and sent forth to expose such nefarious practices?

QUESTIONS WHICH DEMAND ANSWERS.

Can they, upon their own motion, place unprincipled men in the chair by questionable practices and attempt to punish a tribune of the colored people, one who has labored for their interests, worked night and day in pleading their cause in the forum of the nation?

Can they attempt to cripple his influence and boast of their prowess in the streets of the city?

This is the question which demands an answer.

A meeting has been called to consider this case Monday night, August 19th, 8:00, and these questions will no doubt be discussed there.

THE CHARGE AND NOT THE MAN.

As for me, I have no fear. It is the cause, rather than the man which will be prosecuted by you.

It is those members who stay away from the church meetings which make such a disgraceful scene possible.

I have nothing more to say in the premises.

The people made me what I am. During my eighteen years of public life, I have been their servant, listening to the complaints of the lowly and doing all in my power to secure for them the rights which have been so long denied.

The charge that I have in any way reflected upon either factory people or the laboring classes in any walk of life is absurd and requires no denial and yet I do not deny it.

STILL HAVE FRIENDS.

My friends have never deserted me when my enemies sought to encompass my ruin or reject me in defeat.

I leave the matter in the hands of a good God, knowing that despite all the stormy scenes through which I am passing, I shall "after life's fitful fever, sleep well," and the Maker of all good and perfect gifts will, in His own time, wipe all tears from our eyes.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN MITCHELL, JR.

What Are We Here For?

The representative of one of our white Democratic daily journals called on us and after expressing surprise at the action of the First Baptist Church remarked, "Well, why don't you ask them, what are we here for?"

WANTED.—A man with horse and tools to work on a small farm very near city. Suitable for trucking and grazing. Good chance for industrial man and wife. Apply to P. this office.

From Worcester, Mass.

To pay church debt, Rev. W. B. Pearson, pastor of Bethel A. M. E. Church is planning a grand rally of his congregation. It will be in the church, Sunday, Sept. 1. An effort will be made to crowd the church auditorium at all three services.

Special sermons will be preached at 10 o'clock in the morning, 3 o'clock in the afternoon and 7:30 at night.

The main object of the rally is to raise funds to carry on the church work and defunct all debts. It is expected that every member will give a sum of money.

There is a debt of \$1000 on the church property.

The festival which has been in progress for several weeks will continue until September 1st. Some money is being realized each night, but the pastor says an effort has to be made in addition. He hopes some citizen will come forward and assist the church in its struggle for maintenance.

Worcester's young men are beginning to open their eyes since Sgt. Jas. Bell of 99 West St. returned home from across the deep blue. Mr. Bell is a very bright young man and is working very hard just now trying to form a militia company. He held a meeting at his home Sunday, Aug. 11th to talk matters over, and there were 29 in attendance.

One very prominent young man that was there was Mr. Geo. Griffin, formerly a private in L. Co., 6th Regiment.

They made a good showing but there will have to be many more to form a company, but we hope they will come forward.

Officers Elected.

MANCHESTER, VA., Aug. 13, '01.

Following officers elected for installation: R. J. Jackson, C. C.; Payton Carter, V. C.; Umphrey Seaborn, Prostate; Edward Barlett, M. of Ex.; Cyrus Jones, K. A.; B. & S. Robert Holmes, M. A. A.; Fletcher Powell, L. C.; Elijah Murray, O. G.; Jas. T. Thompson, M. of Works; Geo. E. Scott, M. of Finance.

The officers were installed by Deputy J. T. Thompson of Manchester Lodge, No. 11, K. of P., assisted by Sir S. S. Baker, P. C. of Maceo Lodge;

VOICE OF THE WHITE PRESS

JOHN MITCHELL, JR. EXCLUDED FROM CHURCH.

First African Baptist Church Excluded—Publication in the Planet—Meeting Lasted Many Hours.

[Richmond Dispatch, Aug. 8, '01.]

John Mitchell, Jr., editor of the PLANET, and one of the best-known colored men in the State, has been excluded from the First African Baptist Church of this city.

This action was taken last Monday night, after a very stormy meeting, which lasted from shortly after 8 o'clock until 2 o'clock in the morning. The church alleged that Editor Mitchell had permitted a publication in his paper of the proceedings of a former meeting of the church, which, as a loyal member of the church, he should not have done. He was asked to apologize. He declined to do so and was excluded. This is the church's side of the story.

Editor Mitchell contends that he and the representatives of his paper did nothing that was wrong in writing and printing a report of the proceedings of the meeting referred to. He holds, according to a statement made by a minister and a friend of his last night, that the meeting was not a secret one, and that it could not have been, since members of other churches were present and were known to be present, and were not asked to retire. He contends that for this reason the proceedings were placed in the hands of the public and became public property.

He thought a right, as a newspaper publisher, to print in his paper what had occurred in a practically open meeting.

He holds that he has done nothing wrong, and hence has no apology to make.

The meeting of last Monday night was particularly interesting. The attendance at the opening was large, but as the night wore on the crowd lessened until, when the vote was taken, less than 200 persons were in the room.

The vote for exclusion stood sixty-four to fifty-six. The facts given above were obtained with much care. The efforts to see Editor Mitchell in person failed.

A number of other persons were seen and their narratives were all practically as given above.

But several of those seen declared that a faction fight was behind the action taken by the church in withdrawing fellowship from Editor Mitchell.

The meeting, the report of which gave offense to so many of the members of the church, was that one at which Rev. W. T. Johnson, of Lexington was called to the pastorate of the church. One faction wanted this minister, so it is said.

The other faction, of which it is said, Editor Mitchell has belonged, wanted the Rev. Walter Brooks, of Washington, D. C., as pastor. The only faction favoring the Rev. Johnson, and as they were in the majority, they were able to take the action of last Monday night.

It is said that Mitchell will be unable to join any other Baptist church in the city, unless that church is willing to declare that he has been wrongly treated by the First Church.

JOHN MITCHELL NOT DISMAYED.

Friends Will Ask for a Reconsideration.

[Evening Leader, Aug. 8, 1901.]

John Mitchell, editor of the PLANET, is not disturbed at the action of the First Baptist Church (colored) in excluding him from its membership.

The action was taken on the part of the church at a meeting held last Monday night, which ran until 2 o'clock in the morning. The cause of the action was the publication of a letter in the PLANET, which certain members of the church alleged was a secret matter.

When seen this afternoon Mitchell said that the action of the church was entirely contrary to the rules of the church, and that, while he was excluded at the meeting, he did not consider the action legal. His friends have called a meeting for the 19th instant, at which time the question of reconsideration will be considered.

MITCHELL'S FRIENDS AT WORK.

Appeal to Board of Deacons to Reinstate Him.

[The News, Aug. 8, '01.]

John Mitchell, Jr., editor of the PLANET, has been expelled from fellowship in the First African Baptist Church of this city. The grounds of his expulsion is that he published in his paper the proceedings of a meeting called in connection with the election of a pastor, which certain individuals believed should have been kept secret. This majority by which Mitchell was expelled was very narrow, and the result was reached only after a very stormy meeting and a defiance of parliamentary procedure.

Friends of the editor are circulating

petitions addressed to the Board of Deacons, for a meeting to be held on August 19th to take the matter up in due form. The enemies of Mitchell, it is alleged, disregarded the Board of Deacons, to which the matter should have been referred before the congregation was called to pass upon it, the cause of board was favorable to Mitchell.

JOHN MITCHELL'S POSITION.

Contends That He Did Nothing to Cause His Removal from Church.

[Richmond Times, Aug. 9, 1901.]

The friends of John Mitchell, editor of the PLANET, have called a meeting of the First Baptist Church (colored) congregation for the 19th instant to act on the question of reconsidering the action of the church last Monday night in excluding him from its membership.

Mitchell said yesterday that he was in no way dismayed at the action taken last Monday night, for he felt that he had not been legally expelled from the membership of that church. He contends that the reasons given for such action were not sufficient, and he maintains that what he did in the premises was not a breach of faith.

The cause of the trouble was the publication of a letter by Mitchell from Rev. W. T. Johnson, in reference to the pastorate of the church. The congregation, or a portion of them, considered a publisher's matter of secrecy. Mitchell and his friends considered it a matter of public importance, and state as their reasons that it was an official document and addressed to a congregation of 2,000 people. Mitchell says it was a piece of news to the readers of this paper, and as a publisher it was his duty to print the news when it did not conflict with personal obligations.

Mitchell said yesterday that the action of the church on Monday night, when there were less than 200 people of a congregation of 2,000 present, would tend to disgrace the church.

THE MONUMENT ERECTED—SILVER LEAF COURT OF NEWPORT NEWS STANDS \$2.

The Thos. W. Mitchell monument has been erected and veiled and everything is being put in shape for the 26th of August—unveiling day.

The Association desires all these who have promised sums of money to turn it in as early as possible so that they may be able to meet their obligations promptly. All persons having books are requested to have them in the headquarters of the Association, 305 N. 2nd St., by Aug. 19th, 1901.

In the list given in the last issue, the name of Richmond Lodge, No. 1, K. of P. was unintentionally omitted.

We wish to acknowledge the following contributions:

Richmond Lodge, No. 1, K. of P. \$5.00
W. R. Patterson, Bluefield, W. Va. 1.00
Silver Leaf Court, 241, I. O. C. News-
post News, Va. 2.00
Invincible Lodge, Odd Fellows, 2.00

Some time previous to unveiling day a speaker's stand will be erected facing the monument. A very nice cottage has been erected at the entrance to the cemetery and the superintendent places it at the disposal of those persons attending the unveiling, and other comforts as far as possible by the owners of the cemetery.

THE DEACONS IN SESSION.

They Hold Special Meeting—The Church Meeting Ordered—Bro. Briggs Wrathful.

The Deacon Board of the First Baptist Church held a special meeting last Sunday morning after services for the purpose of granting the committee certain privileges in renovating the pulp furniture. Deacon A. W. Holmes, Manager of the True Reformer Hotel presided.

Brother H. F. Jonathan presented a petition signed by a long list of members of the church asking for a church meeting to be held Monday night, Aug. 19th, 1901 to consider the case of John Mitchell, Jr.

Rev. Tom H. Briggs, the sailor contractor was on hand to oppose the grant of the church. He declared that the Deacon Board would be held accountable, if it acted and intimated that they would be dealt with by the church.

THE RULING OF THE CHAIR.

Chairman Holmes ruled that as Rev. Briggs was not a member of the Deacon Board, he had no right to speak without its permission. He insultingly responded that he was a member of the church.

He continued to speak despite the mild protests of the other members.

The Deacon Board voted unanimously to grant the request.

It is always customary to do this when the petition is signed by 15 or more bona-fide members of the church.

Brother Henry G. Carter who did not wear those big-leg white breeches and shad-belly coat last Sunday morning was very indignant and openly declared that the present Deacon Board would be put out.

Rev. Robert Watkins, who was guard at the penitentiary during the Readjuster rule was equally emphatic, but Bro. Nelson Williams, Jr., who forged the names to the application for the meeting was not in evidence on last Sunday morning.

Deacon Harrison Smith was appointed to give out the notice at every service of the church.

That Letter Unsigned.

The True Reformers And The Secret Circular.

A REPLY TO A DENIAL—INSISTS THAT THE CHARGES MADE ARE TRUE.

An Appeal to the Constitution.—A Word About Salaries. A Law Unto Themselves.

No reply has as yet been received from Grand Worship Secretary W. P. Burrell and Cashier E. T. Hill in answer to the queries of Editor John Mitchell, Jr., relative to the secret circular.

ANOTHER SECRET CIRCULAR.

On August 8th, 1901, Editor Mitchell received an envelope addressed to "Editor, Richmond PLANET, Richmond, Va."

The post mark showed that it had been mailed in this city, and had reached the post-office at half past two o'clock that morning.

It contained a copy of the now famous secret circular, on which was written these words: "We send copy for your perusal."

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

It also contained a letter type-written, well punctuated, being the work of a person thoroughly trained in the type-writing business. It is a model of neatness and correct spelling.

It reads as follows:

THE DENIALS AND OTHER QUESTIONS.

"RICHMOND, VA., August, 1901.
Editor, Richmond PLANET:

Knowing you have always labored to keep our people posted on such things as affect their interest, we beg you to please ask the following questions relative to the secret circular, the Reformer has so often mentioned through it columns recently: (1) If its contents are false, why were the Chiefs of the Divisions ordered to summon their messengers in secret meetings and instruct them not to let it be read in their subordinate Foundations?

WANTS THE REFORMER TO PUBLISH.

(2) If the circular is false, why does the Reformer not publish it, and advise its readers to read the Guide Book, issued by the Board of Directors prior to the last Grand Sitting, read section 2, page 59, of the Constitution, and then read the reports of the Minutes of the Grand Foundation?

THE PRESIDENT'S SALARY.

(3) If the President's salary and the salary of other certain officers were increased before the last Grand Sitting, why were they not reported to the Grand Foundation for confirmation last September? Read the President's report of the 20th Annual Session and see if he mentions it. (4) How many of the delegates to the last Grand Sitting knew of these important changes?

THE SAFETY OF THE ORDER.

(5) How can an order be safe as long as certain officers can come together and have their salaries raised when ever they feel like it and not report such to the Grand Body when in annual session for confirmation?

Yours for the race, SUBSCRIBERS."

It may be that Messrs. Burrell and Hill are too busy getting ready to install the True Reformer pastor of the First Baptist Church to prepare their answers.

THE FIRST TIME.

This is the first time that any communication has been opened up between the local secret circular committee and the general public.

"Run them to earth" is rather an ominous sign, since it must be conceded that the headquarters are in this city.

The organization is an incorporated institution and as such is directly subject to the order of the court.

Does Mr. W. P. Burrell receive as Grand Worship Secretary \$150.00 per month? Does Mr. E. T. Hill as Cashier receive \$150.00 per month?

A COMPARISON OF WAGES.

What is their pay for extra work? If this is the amount of their salaries, what do the clerks, assistant clerks, etc., receive? A comparison of wages would tend to enlighten the public from whom the organization draws its support and whose funds tend to swell the coffers of the institution in question.

If the officials have been misrepresented, the columns of the PLANET are open to them and through this channel, they can make any statement which will enlighten the public.

—Dr. D. A. Ferguson, the Dentist of 110 East Leigh St., has removed his office to 609 North 2nd St., opposite the True Reformers' Bank. His new office is much nicer than his old one, which will be more convenient for his patients.

THEIR DOORS OPEN WIDE.

A Remarkable Letter—Speaks Plainly To the Editor.—The Action of the First Baptist Church—A Cordial Invitation.

Editor John Mitchell, Jr. has been the recipient of invitations to join the Episcopal and the A. M. E. Churches.

The following letter from a well-known white Catholic Priest is a model letter of its kind, and not having obtained its consent we withhold his name:

THE REVEREND'S LETTER, WILMINGTON, DEL., Aug. 9, 1901.
My Dear Mr. Mitchell:

In today's Baltimore Sun, I read an account of your expulsion from the Baptist Church.

Now, will you permit me as an old friend of yours to give expression to a thought that suggests itself to me? I can, of course express no opinion as to the facts connected with the case, since I have neither heard nor read anything beyond the few lines in the Sun.

INTENDED AS PUNISHMENT.

The action on the part of the officers of the First Baptist Church is, no doubt, intended as a punishment and will reflect on you in the eyes of some few people.

But, after all, what does it amount to? I have often wondered how a man of your intelligence and education could connect himself with a man-made church.

THE LORD'S INTENTION.

The Lord intended his church to be an organized society to which all must belong in order to save their souls. That heresies would come; that different denominations would spring up, asserting each for itself, to be the Church of Christ was divinely foretold and should cause no wonder to one who has read as much as you.

THE ONLY TROUBLE.

The trouble with you, it seems to me is this; you want to be successful, you want to be popular and since the majority of people in your state is made up of Baptists, you think that you must be one of them.